



NEWS RELEASE

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Couple to Face Trial for Abuse of More Than a Dozen Dogs

Two Acton dog trainers ordered in July to stand trial for allegedly abusing 26 dogs under their care pleaded not guilty to the charges today, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Junior Barillas Morales (dob 12/7/89) and Natasha Elena Ahmad (dob 11/29/92) were arraigned today and are scheduled back for a pretrial hearing on Aug. 25 in Department A17 of the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Antelope Valley Branch.

Morales and Ahmad face a total of 33 charges: 13 felony counts of cruelty to an animal and 13 misdemeanor counts of cruelty to an animal.

Deputy District Attorney Amarilla Blondia said the defendants also face three felony counts of child endangerment, two felony counts of grand theft and two misdemeanor counts of petty theft.

On Feb. 7, three very thin dogs were discovered by neighbors, according to evidence presented at the preliminary hearing. A subsequent investigation uncovered two deceased dogs and eight additional dogs in the defendant's property. One of the live dogs had to have a leg amputated due to an untreated infection, the prosecutor said.

According to testimony at the preliminary hearing, the defendants operated a dog training business called Real Deal K-9's. Customers of the business allege they paid thousands of dollars and received very sick, thin dogs.

On May 2, investigators searching the defendants' home allegedly found a loaded gun in a sofa where the couple's three children, ages 1, 4 and 7, could find it, the prosecutor added. The home was extremely dirty and a total of 24 dogs were seized during that search, according to court testimony.

If convicted as charged, Morales faces a possible maximum penalty of more than 34 years in state prison and Ahmad could face a possible maximum sentence of more than 21 years in prison.

Case MA071159 remains under investigation by the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation and the County of Los Angeles Department of Animal Care and Control.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.